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Resilience in the (Ordinary) City: Needs and Strategies of a Queer Community in South Texas

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Resilience in the (Ordinary) City: Needs and Strategies of a Queer Community in South Texas

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Abstract

Resilience in the (Ordinary) City: Needs and Strategies of a Queer Community in South Texas

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Resilient living is crucial for marginalized communities as they navigate the often-oppressive world around them. Queer, or sexual and gender minority (SGM), individuals face stressors and enact resilience differently, contingent upon community needs and resources. This thesis investigates needs and resilience strategies of SGM community members in San Antonio, Texas. This urban area in South Texas is an "ordinary city" in the context of queerness, meaning it is not home to SGM-specific neighborhoods or queer mythic status. These ordinary cities, though not popularly understood as sites of queer residence, are common. Studying SGM community behaviors and needs in ordinary cities bridges a conceptual gap in literature and provides insight for residents, organizers, and policymakers. An iterative, interpretive analysis of Queer San Antonians' interviews (N = 80) uncovered tangible healthcare and space needs; structural needs for local SGM organizations; personal and communal resilience strategies; and place-based mechanisms of resilience. Implications discuss community identification, visibility politics, place-based inquiry, and multilevel studies of resilience.

Keywords: Resilience, queer community, sexual and gender minority, ordinary city

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Introduction

It took Willie[1] years to find himself. Amidst confusion about his sexual identity, relationships, and HIV-positive status, he was lost in places that never really felt like home. That changed when, around 2011, Willie moved to San Antonio, Texas; his life changed for the better. In an interview, Willie shared:

> "I've found some of my best friends here and they've become family to me. My support system was some of the best, out of San Antonio… There's just something about it that makes me not want to leave. I've had many opportunities to leave but I always just keep trucking here."

Willie's account highlights the importance of geographic place in an individual's ability to remain strong through difficult times. His experience as queer person in San Antonio is just that: *his* experience. The stories of San Antonio's sexual and gender minority community are as dynamic and sprawling as the rolling hills that border their South Texas city. At the core of many narratives, however, is resilience.

Resilience has received much attention in communication studies as a vehicle for conceptualizing individual and community responses to adverse experiences. Buzzannell and Houston (2018) described human resilience as a multilevel concept, applicable to interpersonal, team, and organizational settings. Resilience is the process of response to hardships life, be it through subtle adaptation or radical change (Sonn & Fisher, 1998; DeVerteuil & Golubchikov, 2016). Studies of resilience lean toward acute adverse events; however, chronic resilience, or mundane processes that facilitate strength, warrant our attention as ongoing social processes for individuals and communities alike (Ramasubramanian, 2017; Lenette, Brough & Cox, 2013;

[1] All names are pseudonyms.

Vyas & Dillahunt, 2017). Everyday resilience is especially important for those who identify as sexual and gender minorities (SGMs). Normative structures cater to cisgender, heterosexual people, creating obstacles for those who live in their margins (Asakura & Craig, 2014).

Previous research on resilience has also made clear the need to understand how place can contribute to and hinder resilience. Disciplines like city planning tend to conceptualize place-based resilience in terms of physical infrastructure but exclude the impacts of the built environment on human communities and vice versa (Pfefferbaum & Klomp, 2013; Vale, 2014). The interplay between geography and community is important when studying SGMs because their residential patterns are often subject to heteronormative living standards (Whittemore & Smart, 2016). While queer geographic neighborhoods have been lauded as communities that foster independence and strength, they may come at the expense of more marginalized SGMs who have intersecting identities with race and class (Rosenberg, 2017).

Queer life cannot be flattened to one identity, experience, or geographic location. To generate a more holistic picture of queer adversity and resilience in urban spaces, this thesis examines the context of an "ordinary city." Queer ordinary cities do not have enclaves or neighborhoods specific to SGM life (Brown, 2008; Myrdahl, 2013). San Antonio, a mid-sized city in south-central Texas, fits the definition of a queer ordinary city. Its position as an urban space in the American South makes it a unique site of study for sexual and gender minority residents and the communities they form; the traditionally-conservative social ecosystem of Texas situates queer residents between everyday queerphobia and political disenfranchisement. Ordinary cities are key in understanding everyday processes of queer resilience because they are home to more SGMs than gay neighborhoods across the world (Ghaziani, 2019)

This thesis builds off the important work of scholars who identify and serve the needs of queer populations and it works in conversation with organizational and community theorists to fill gaps in academic notions of resilience in marginalized collectives. The Strengthening Colors of Pride Project, a partnership between Trinity University, Dell Medical School, and San Antonio's Pride Center, aimed to highlight the complexities of queer organizing and community building in a place where SGM structures are not quite visible. Through interviews (N = 80), queer San Antonians offered their perspectives on community needs, resilience strategies, and unique elements of their city. Through an iterative, qualitative approach, I generated research questions, analyzed interview data, developed themes that honored participants' narratives, and drew connections between their lived experience and existing bodies of critical scholarship.

Questions and subsequent findings of this investigation were threefold. The first question addressed SGM community needs in San Antonio. I found that participants express needs for visibility and access of resources pertaining to health, social space, demographic support, and community cohesion. The second question asked about themes in resilience strategies for SGMs. Data indicated that participants enacted resilience at the individual and community level; not only did these levels have distinct characteristics, but they also work together to bolster responses to acute and chronic stressors. The last question interrogated the relationship between resilience and place. Participants invoked their geographic location(s) in both resilience mentalities and embodied strategies than fell most in line with the community level.

Implications of this work for organizational theory tease out community identification, tensions in queer visibility, place-based methodologies. Resilience implications include a discussion on multi-level resilience theorizing, the role of language and culture in studying the construct, and tensions of proactive versus reactive processes. The project also identified themes

specific to San Antonio's queer community that can improves lives in this city and areas that function in similar urban contexts.

I organize the thesis in the following way. Initially, I review literature on resilience, queerness, and place. I argue that SGM community resilience is multi-level and place-dependent, providing a rationale for questions about needs, strategies, and geography. Next, I explain the Strengthening Colors of Pride Project's study procedures and the thematic analysis method employed in this qualitative study of SGM residents in San Antonio. Finally, I discuss limitations, implications, and future directions for organizational theory and resilience studies.

Literature Review

Resilience

Afifi (2018) described resilience as simultaneously one of the most studied constructs across disciplines and most elusive. To set the stage for the ways in which resilience presents in this thesis, I unpack important tenets of the construct in existing literature. Resilience is *multi-level, forward-focused, chronic,* and *resource-dependent*. These themes are important because they provide background on how both individuals and communities exhibit resilience in everyday life in response to oppressive power structures.

Resilience is multi-level

To begin, Barbour (2017) explained that social phenomena do not exist merely at one level; he described the micro, meso, and macro levels as interpersonal, relational, and organizational respectively. This means the scale of communication impacts the appearance of the phenomena. Resilience, then, is a multi-level construct studied from both individual and collective perspectives. The micro and macro levels are most important for this study because participants discuss their personal strategies and ones they share with the community at large.

The micro-level of resilience is often measured by assessing one's personality traits, self-worth, or coping skills (Davey, Eaker & Walters, 2003; Hart, Brannan & De Chesnay, 2014). A lack of individual resilience has been associated with apathy, burnout, and mental illness (Ebersöhn, 2017; Egan, 1993; Friborg et al., 2009). Afifi (2018) argued that individual-level resilience in communication scholarship sits on uneven theoretical ground because studies thereof focus more on outcomes than processes. Expanding the discipline's knowledge of micro-scale resilience requires investigating *how* individuals enact resilience, not just *if* they enact.

On the macro scale, individuals experience resilience through connections with their social networks and communities. Community resilience can increase a group's sense of safety and calmness in times of struggle (Norris & Stevens, 2007). Pfefferbaum and Klomp (2013) clarified that community resilience is not merely actualized through the collection of resilient individuals; rather, it is the result of collective actions that keep everyone involved strong and ready to adapt to adversity. Communication is central to most models of community resilience; the lens of the discipline paves the way for a better understanding of the networks at play in confronting adversity (Houston et al., 2015).

Buzzannell and Houston (2018) acknowledged the importance of studying resilience from multiple levels but kept the levels as separate pieces of discussion. This thesis studies levels as they operate alongside one another and intersect. Examining the interplay of the construct's layers develops a more thorough understanding of how and why the experience varies by scale.

Resilience is forward-focused

Scholars often discuss resilience in terms of returning to normalcy or *bouncing back.* Buzzannell (2010) argued that the notion of *bouncing back*, however, is unrealistic because the post-event world no longer exists; instead, we create new normalcies based on our adaptation to stressors. Houston (2015) proposed an alternative theorization with this distinction in mind: *bouncing forward.* From this perspective, communities experience adversity, learn from it, and move forward with that lived experience in mind. This paradigm is useful because it acknowledges the long-term impacts of trauma on individuals and communities and its role in forming new life schema. Though I acknowledge that linear temporality (i.e. *forward* versus *back*) is an inherently Western schema (Ballard, 2007), this operationalization of resilience best

captures its iterative nature. In short, resilience is not the process of returning to the status quo, but that of constructing new, improved conditions (DeVerteuil & Golubchikov, 2016).

Resilience is chronic

Most of the current literature focuses on resilient responses to isolated traumatic incidents like natural disasters, health epidemics, or violent attacks (Barbour et al., 2018; Longstaff & Yang, 2008; Nucifora et al., 2017). This is acute resilience contingent upon a specific inciting event. Jones and Jetten (2010) suggested that ordinary stressors may also generate trauma, therefore warranting resilience. The latter use of resilience in everyday life is chronic.

Chronic resilience receives less scholarly attention than acute, likely because the consequences are not as immediately noticeable as opposed to, for instance, those of a hurricane. Though understudied, these everyday processes are crucial to long-term wellbeing. Lenette, Brough, and Cox (2012) found in their study of refugee mothers that mundane tasks like waking up early to accomplish work or gossiping with community members constitute resilience. Their study argued that resilience in the ordinary context is an iterative process, evolving based on daily needs (Lenette, Brough & Cox, 2012). This chronic resilience is more pertinent to the thesis because the community in question has not experienced a major traumatic event. Instead, they use resilience to mitigate ongoing traumas and remain strong.

Resilience is resource dependent

Though scholars often conceptualize resilience as a personality trait, Alvord and Grados (2005) theorized resilience as a process influenced by environmental factors. Buzzannell (2010) and Lenette, Brough, and Cox (2012) also acknowledged that access to social capital improves one's ability to enact resilient behaviors. Resilience is a socially influenced process both helped and hindered by outside factors.

Consideration of external elements is especially important for understanding the strategies of historically marginalized populations. Those without financial or social capital may have a more difficult time cultivating a resilience mindset or learning and practicing resilient behaviors (Bottrell, 2009). Nondominant communities often struggle to exhibit adaptive behaviors during trauma, leading some scholars to believe these collectives lack resilience entirely (Sonn & Fisher, 1998). This pertains less to community attributes and more to the structures that marginalized them in the first place; "[i]n many instances, the natural support systems that existed in these communities were removed through oppression," (Sonn & Fisher, 1998, p. 459). These power structures generate ongoing trauma for the oppressed (Wexler, DiFluvio & Burke, 2009), connecting back to the idea that resilience is chronic. We must keep in mind structural barriers to resilience; doing so allows us to understand nondominant individuals' and communities' strategies with more clarity and address needs that can improve resilience.

Marginalized people exhibit resilience through the resources to which they have access. Rydzik and Anitha (2019) studied female migrant workers' responses to workplace violations. They found that for these women, resilience strategies took time and resource accumulation. For instance, before nonnative speakers filed a complaint, they first needed to gain proficiency in the country's language. Language was a tool that enabled resilience. Rydzik and Anitha (2019) also highlighted that strategies vary for migrant workers existing at different intersections of identity; white women did not need to resist racism at work, those with citizenship did not risk deportation, etc. Oppressed individuals enact resilience through their resources, which may be community affiliations, skills, forms of identity capital, or knowledge.

In sum, resilience requires deeper examination in its multiple levels, forward-focus, chronic orientation, and resource dependence. This thesis explores the interplay of these concepts to develop richer theorization of the construct from a critical perspective.

Sexual and Gender Minorities

For sexual and gender minorities (SGMs), resilience helps individuals respond to identity-based oppression (queerphobia). Their distinctive ways of enacting resilience provide insights not just for sexual and gender minority communities, but for other marginalized collectives. To unpack this further, I explain language frameworks for sexual and gender minorities, the impacts of queerphobia, and previously researched strategies for queer resilience. These elements rationalize a deeper investigation to resilience strategies and needs for sexual and gender minorities.

Language frameworks

Understanding the present study requires a justification of queer labels and explanation of intersectionality in terms of queerness. They set the stage for how I discuss participants and think about inclusivity in sexual and gender minority communities.

Acronyms often define queer communities. For consistency and inclusivity, I use the terms *SGM* and *queer* interchangeably and in preference to *LGBTQ+*. *SGM* stands for sexual and gender minorities. *LGBTQ+*, which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and any other sexual/gender identity marginalized by a society in which cisgender (in which sex and gender are congruent) and heterosexual (in which attraction and gender are incongruent) are "normal." Monro (2020) problematizes the latter acronym for its length, constant evolution, and exclusivity to the Global North. *SGM* and *queer* acknowledge the fluidity of sexual orientation

and gender identity, serving as more inclusive labels for people who identify outside cisgender and heterosexual boundaries.

Intersectionality is a crucial framework for understanding the resilience of SGM communities because of the tendency for scholars to homogenize queer experiences (Fotopoulou, 2012). Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) define it as "the overlapping and conflicting dynamics of race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, and other inequalities," (p. 788). In terms of queerness, intersectionality explains why people with different identities experience the world—and its forms of oppression—through varying lenses. For instance, a black, gay man may experience discrimination due to racism, colorism, and homophobia, but does not have to worry about citizenship scrutiny or sexism as would an undocumented, queer Latina. Queer experiences and resilience tactics are not monolithic; instead, they involve complex mixes of social factors, challenges, and opportunities.

Impacts of queerphobia

Queerphobia impacts the resilience processes of SGMs in distinctive ways. This section details information about queerphobia, trauma, and mistreatment that may be unsettling or triggering for some readers. To move past these descriptions and into the next section of the review, proceed to the section entitled "Place" on p. 12.

Queer people, starting in childhood, have their identities pathologized against heteronormativity, or the idea that there are only two genders (male and female) and that it is "normal" to be attracted to the gender that you are not (Harvey, 2012). Harvey (2012) suggested that existing outside of this binary framework creates anxiety for people who subscribe heavily to heteronormativity. Furthermore, oppression and harassment based on this anxiety puts queer people at risk. Gender minorities specifically experience disproportionately high levels of

domestic abuse and fatal gender-based violence (Wirtz et al., 2020). "[I]nternational efforts to track the murder of transgender people suggest that a transgender person is murdered at least once every three days" (Stotzer, 2017, p. 1362). Boyd and Jeffries (2018) outlined other ways in which queerphobia manifests, including workplace discrimination, limited healthcare options, anti-queer legislation (i.e. bathroom bills), and sexual assault.

The effects of queerphobia are often mental health related. SGMs often experience familial rejection, bullying, and social isolation, which can lead to depression, lower academic achievement, and increased overall stress (Craig et al., 2017). Smith et al. (2016) found that sexual minority youth attempt suicide at a higher rate than their heterosexual counterparts and experience related risk factors such as substance abuse and posttraumatic stress. Queer communities have a dire need for systems of care because of the damaging effects of systemic oppression (Craig, 2011); however, when these systems either fail their populations or do not exist at all, SGMs often develop methods of resilience for themselves and their communities (Shelton et al., 2018). SGM communities are important for resilience research because they are often called to resilience by oppressive circumstances.

Queer resilience strategies

Previous research on SGM communities and resilience suggest that confidence in gender and/or sexual identity contributes to resilience because that sureness often develops alongside the ability to defend oneself (Singh & McKleroy, 2011; Grossman, D'Augelli & Frank, 2011; Asakura 2016). In addition to this self-empowerment, Singh, Meng and Hansen (2014) found in their study of transgender youth that support systems (i.e. affirming communities, families, and friends) supplement resilience.

Since the late 20th Century, queer resilience efforts have become more visible in the ways they take on power structures (Grindstaff, 2014). Recorded resilience methods in SGM circles include employing queer-specific jargon, disregarding heteronormative ideographs (i.e. marriage), and creating networks of role models. (Ramirez & Sterzing, 2017; Gutierrez-Perez & Andrade, 2018; Testa, Jimenez & Rankin, 2014). For example, Boyd and Jeffries (2018) discussed 'critical hope' as a framework for queer-affirming organizations resisting vitriol and queerphobia. They explain that this paradigm employs cautious optimism and plans for transformation in the face of structural inequality (Boyd and Jeffries, 2018). The variety of resilience and resistance strategies present in the literature point to the ingenuity of sexual and gender minorities on their journey to affirmation in a world stacked against them.

The current scholarly convesation on queer resilience focuses on responses to specific instances of queerphobia rather than structural inequities that warrant resilience. Both acute and chronic oppression contribute to the development of resilience and must be considered. This thesis provides equal consideration to the specific and the systemic, creating a more holistic picture of SGM resilience at both the individual and community levels.

Place

Geographic place is important to this study because it both affects and is affected by human inhabitants; community needs and resources vary based on their location. This section explains how place factors into previous resilience work, how queerness manifests in cities, and San Antonio's unique characteristics as a data site.

Resilience and place

Previous scholarship outlines a connection between resilience and place (Colten, Kates & Laska, 2008; Cutter et al., 2008; Zatura, Hall & Murray, 2008). Most of this work comes from disaster studies and focuses on the maintenance or repair of physical infrastructure. Physical resilience not only impacts the built environment, but the people who live there. Gimenez, Labaka, and Hernantes (2017) argued that improving city resilience is an inherently communicative process because it requires stakeholders from different governmental structures and private corporations. Place-based resilience, though social in nature, receives little attention in communication studies. This thesis bridges that gap by explicitly including geography as a factor in individual and community resilience strategies.

Inequality also dictates the resilience practices of geographically bound communities. Disparities in resource allocation and gentrification imply that not all resilience is created equal, generating different needs based on physical location (Meerow & Newell, 2019; Gould & Lewis, 2018). Gruebner et al. (2015) studied neighborhood differences in New York City after Hurricane Sandy; they discovered significant variation in resilience factors and mental health outcomes based on borough location and access to resources. These disparities may also exist in San Antonio which, like many urban areas, contains wealth discrepancies by neighborhood. Combined with this study's focus on SGMs, needs and resilience practices may differ for individuals with identities on the intersections of queerness, class, and place.

Queerness in cities

Despite the urban environment historically serving as a congregation space for SGM individuals, queerness is often excluded from conventional notions of what a city ought to be (Ghaziani, 2019). Smart and Klein (2013) alluded to one of the largest problems with for queer communities in cities: urban planners. Frish (2002) delved into *heterosexism* in planning, or the

sub/conscious choices and policies implemented to structure the built environment in ways that privilege heterosexual life. These practices in city development exclude queer people (specifically queer people of color) from housing and transportation plans through policing 'deviant' sexual behavior and strictly defining which family structures qualify for single-family housing; though less overt in the 21st Century, echoes of the past still impact the living structures of SGM city-dwellers. As such, queer people often congregate in enclaves that support their identities, also known as neighborhoods of affinity.

Neighborhoods of affinity are "neighborhoods where a particular social group resides close to one another and has strong social ties," (Smart & Klein ,2013, p. 110). Smart and Klein's (2013) analysis of queer neighborhoods builds on the concept of residential self-selection, which posits that people move to places that meet their needs and interests. They argue that SGM neighborhoods of affinity exist out of a desire for queer individuals to exist and thrive around like-identity individuals. These areas historically fueled political empowerment and authenticity for their queer residents (Whittemore & Smart, 2016). They serve as safe havens from the heterosexist plans of other urban areas.

SGM neighborhoods have "large shares of same-sex-partnered households," (Smart & Klein, 2013, p. 110). This view of a queer neighborhood could be perceived as limiting because it only accounts for *couples*, people who are *housed*, and individuals in *same-sex* couples (ignoring bisexuals in opposite-sex relationships and heterosexual trans people). These neighborhoods of affinity are also subject to the problematic notion of metronormativity, or the privileging of white, wealthy, urban spaces as the ideal for queer experiences (Greene, 2019). This neglects the hardships and trauma experienced in these neighborhoods by those who do not fall into the 'ideal' picture of metronormativity (Reck, 2009; Rosenberg, 2017).

Focusing on these enclaves ignores most the world's queer inhabitants who do not live in these highly concentrated neighborhoods (Mattson, 2020). In fact, Whittemore and Smart (2016), through a case study of metropolitan north Texas, uncovered that queer neighborhoods of affinity are less concentrated than they used to be, dispersing SGM residents into other areas with a non-queer majority. Despite this, much of the work on queer urban life focus on cities with established queer mythos. Stone (2018) invoked legendary cities like New York City and San Francisco, which are supposed to serve as messages to SGM individuals everywhere: "it gets better." They argue, however, that scholars study "great" cities but neglect more rural, conservative, and/or "ordinary" cities, places where sometimes, "it" does not get better.

Cities like these, Ghaziani (2019) explains, do not have centralized SGM populations; he theorizes queer urbanites in "ordinary" cities as part of cultural archipelagos. These archipelagos differ from neighborhoods of affinity insofar as they are not conceptualized as islands of queerness within a sea of heteronormativity. Instead, SGM residents spread throughout the city, sometimes congregate in queer establishments, but typically exist outside of mythical, concentrated areas (Ghaziani, 2019). Greene (2019) argues that these organizing structures are understudied in the United States, making it imperative to celebrate and explore them.

Smart and Klein (2013) hint at the importance of neighborhoods of affinity for community resilience. In some cases, living in a queer neighborhood acts as a protective factor against substance ab/use, allows residents to engage in sexual practices without fear of violence, and enables SGM collective action (Buttram & Kurtz, 2013; Lauria & Knopp, 1985; Kelly et al., 2014). While these findings indicate promising results in studies of queer resilience, limiting research to large-city, queer-specific neighborhoods equally limits our theorizing about SGM social networks and community practices (Forstie, 2019).

Studying populations in varied geographic settings provides accuracy in representation, diversity in thought, and deliverables for policy (Stone, 2018; Mattson, 2020). Forstie (2019) urges social science scholars to study queer populations in ordinary cities because the ways in which they form community likely differ from places in which SGM infrastructure receives prioritization. San Antonio is one such ordinary city.

San Antonio, Texas

Approximately eighty miles south of the Texas State Capitol sits San Antonio, the largest city in Bexar County. With a population just over 1.5 million (Census Bureau, 2018), San Antonio is home to rich history long before and after colonization. Post-World War II era changes in America's urban form expanded the city limits and contributed to its mass suburbanization; additionally, San Antonio has a large Catholic population and military presence (Cisneros, 1996; Bremer, 2004). Academic work fails to address queerness as an element of San Antonio's city life. San Antonio is a unique site because of its population, history, and location. This unique identity, however, does not limit this study's findings to Bexar County; instead, perspectives on San Antonio may uncover trends within other cities in the American South.

Research Questions

A review of relevant literature clarifies a connection between resilience, sexual and gender minorities, and place. In short, the goals of this thesis are to provide takeaways for SGM individuals and communities in understudied locations; uncover the needs of the population and others like it; build on resilience theorizing in queer communities. With these in mind, I seek to answer the questions:

RQ1: What SGM community needs do residents express?

Community-based research ought to have member well-being in mind. RQ1 came about after looking at the data and realizing that beyond descriptive information, interviewees disclose needs for their community. It felt disingenuous as a critical researcher to focus merely on theory; practical, prescriptive data in the right hands can improve lives. Additionally, the question is necessary because it gives us a baseline for the community and provides context for resilience (i.e. under what circumstances of deprivation these individuals enact resilience). It also answers calls in literature to address the nuances of queer life in ordinary cities.

RQ2: How do SGM residents enact resilience?

RQ2 allows for exploration of the interplay resilience levels. As the literature suggests, too many studies of this phenomenon only examine it from only one level. Answering this question empowers queer individuals and adds depth to scholarly conversations of resilience by teasing out its performance at the individual and community levels as well as their interactions.

RQ3: How do resilience strategies coincide with place?

RQ3 expands on literature that suggests a connection between resilience and place. Answering this question offers useful strategies for enacting resilience in the urban environment for practitioners. It also provides a jumping-off point for scholars who wish to connect culture, geography, and communication.

Methods

Project Details

Data collected and used for this study are part of Phase II of the Strengthening Colors of Pride (SCoP) Project, a community-based collaborative study. The SCoP Project received IRB approval from Trinity University and is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Interdisciplinary Research Leaders program. Data are from interviews with Bexar County residents who identify as sexual and gender minorities.

Participants and Interviews

Researchers collected quantitative survey data from which they recruited participants for interviews. Recruitment and participation in interviews took place between May and September of 2018. Participants of the interviews (N = 80) all lived in Bexar County and qualified for in-person interviews with high scores on the Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al., 2008). Additional qualifications included either an adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) score of four or higher on a ten-point scale or an income below $30,000 per year. ACEs questions captured childhood neglect, abuse, and household dysfunction. Scores of four or more have been associated with negative health outcomes in adulthood. These participants both expressed resilience and experienced childhood or economic reasons to develop resilience. The self-identified demographic breakdowns are as follows:

	Black	Latinx	White
Transgender/Gender Nonconforming	4	10	9
Cisgender Women	11	12[2]	10
Cisgender Men	7	10	8[3]

Participants ranged in age from 16 to 71 with an average of 35.5. Pseudonyms protect the identities of participants.

Members of the SCoP team in San Antonio conducted semi-structured interviews. The interview protocol consisted of questions about resilience, hardships, identity, place, and more. Recorded interviews lasted between 45 and 120 minutes, after which participants received a $40 VISA check card as a token of appreciation. All but one interview were conducted in English; a translator facilitated the one Spanish-language interview. Recordings were transcribed.

Analysis

The research questions guided and were modified through an interpretive, thematic analytical approach. I used NVivo 12 to complete multiple rounds of coding. First, I completed open coding by sorting sections of text by topic(s). For instance, when participant Eric said "[r]esilience may have a connection to faith," I coded it both under "Resilience" and "Religion." When open coding concluded, I had 295 separate topic codes.

Next, I reviewed the codes for themes. Owen's (1984) described three criteria for uncovering a theme in qualitative data: recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness. Recurrence occurs when two or more parts of, in this case, an interview "had the same thread of meaning,"

[2] The original data set consists of 13 Latinx cisgender women; I excluded one person who did not live in Bexar County at the time of the interview.
[3] Two of these men participates in a single interview. I counted them as one in the sample size.

(Owen, 1984, p. 275). Responses to the question “what advice would you give to your younger self?” all pertain to self-improvement, thereby denoting thematic recurrence. Repetition is more direct than recurrence, referring to key words or phrases that appear multiple times. An example of this is the phrase “fake it ‘til you make it” appearing across several interviews. Forcefulness is the magnitude with which a meaning comes across, which may occur through strong language, pauses, and hyperbole. For example, interviewee Victoria made her anxiety clear when she said, “I'm the first one to say, you know, there's a bomb going to explode right here anytime.” This strong use of imagery communicates her fears.

Extending on Owen’s work, Lawless and Chen (2019) recommend a critical perspective on thematic analysis that “consider[s] how the patterned results are connected to larger social ideologies, linking frequency and forcefulness to the influence of dominant social discourses,” (pp. 95-96). This means themes in the data must connect to power structures beyond the data itself. For instance, Jesus said “I feel like us Hispanics and Latinos, we have that, everybody thinks you're tough, you're this, you're that.” This statement comments on racist stereotypes, requiring the researcher to dig past the interview and into literature on culture. Doing so connects data and previous scholarship, ensuring that themes reflect and confront normative discourses.

Positionality

In Bal and Trainor’s (2016) rubric for conducting culturally responsive research with nondominant communities, author positionality is crucial for readers to understand how the scholar’s identity impacts analysis. “Conceptualizing research as situated cultural practice acknowledges the regimes of power/knowledge as central players in the reproduction of disparities in access, influence, and thus, predictable variance in outcomes” (Bal & Trainor,

2016, p. 327). Thus, conducting responsible work with the SCoP Project requires a disclosure of my insider/outsider status in relation to the participants.

I identify as a white, queer woman who has little-to-no contact with San Antonio's SGM communities and spaces. Queerness gives me imagined comradery with the interviewees, as my ultimate goal with this work is to improve the lives of SGM individuals in Texas and beyond. Whiteness grants me the privilege to be unknowing of many oppressive situations the participants of color face. Youth denies me the lived experience and collective memory of queer organizers from bygone decades (this, too, may be considered a privilege). My identity as a scholar fuels my desire to learn and engage with perspectives different from my own so together, we may answer the questions at hand and use them for positive change.

Findings

To answer each research question in brief:

RQ1: What SGM community needs do residents express?

Residents express needs that revolve around access and visibility, both of which are contingent upon place. These needs separate out into four distinct categories: health, social space, demographic support, and community cohesion. Health refers to the lack of affordable, affirming mental and physical healthcare in the San Antonio area. Social space needs are requests for inclusive spaces to build community and socialize with other SGMs. Demographic support entails systems of care for members of San Antonio's SGM community who often go overlooked. Finally, community cohesion needs are mostly ideologically driven and pertain to garnering closeness and organizing for change. SGM residents not only express needs, but often provide courses of action to remedy their unmet desires.

RQ2: How do SGM residents enact resilience?

SGM residents enact resilience at both the individual and community levels. Individual-level strategies separate into internal and relational. Internal practices include resilience mindsets and tangible coping mechanisms. Relational methods involve both chronic and acute instances of resilience. Community-level practices include collective resilience mentalities and reciprocal SGM support systems. At this level, many resilience strategies come about through formal SGM organizations or networks. This answer reveals the way in which micro- and macro-level resilience act both separately and in tandem.

RQ3: How do resilience strategies coincide with place?

I identify four place-based resilience strategies: forging physical boundaries, invoking place identity, utilizing community locations, and participating in SGM events. For the most part, participants

overlay their resilience structures onto the city of San Antonio, utilizing its existing resources and building (literally and metaphorically) where they do not exist. Collective visibility recurs throughout.

What follows is an in-depth exploration of each answer containing exemplar sections of data for each answer component.

RQ1: WHAT SGM COMMUNITY NEEDS DO RESIDENTS EXPRESS?

Nia, a high school student, wants queer friends so she may freely discuss matters of identity. Tiara, a full-time employee, needs convenient public transit to traverse San Antonio without a car. Bruce, a man in hospice with terminal cancer, says he wants not for himself, but for his community, one that he argues needs cohesive, sustainable practices. The wants and needs of SGM residents in San Antonio are expansive. Community needs pertain to *health, social spaces, demographic support,* and *community cohesion.* These four categories cluster around access and visibility.

Health

Health refers to mental and physical healthcare needs that exist due to a lack of affordability, queer competence, and proximity. Interview data suggests that SGM residents of San Antonio had health needs and were disappointed with access to health services. To best unpack the complexities of health, I begin with mental health and follow with physical health.

Mental health

Community members explained that they need mental healthcare because of their experiences with mental illness and distress. Darnell shared, “I've never been diagnosed with depression, but I know something’s there. And I know if I go to those dark places and I stay there too long, bad, bad things will happen.” Darnell’s experience with mental illness is nameless to healthcare professionals, making it more difficult for him to receive formal treatment. Though he tried meeting with a therapist, the experience was more burdensome than cathartic. As such, he copes by ignoring his emotions and moving past hardship without a second thought. This does not come without a cost; Darnell acknowledges that bottling his emotions is unsustainable

because he reaches a boiling point and lashes out verbally. His support system consists of friends and family, but he alludes to needing more external support when his loved ones are unavailable.

For some, the costs of mental health services are too high to justify seeking help. Eddy stopped receiving counseling because they[4] had more urgent financial needs to meet. "A few years ago, I went to a counseling service… I had to go there almost every week and had to pay a lot of money… they keep upping the copay. It used to be $25. Now it's $50." Eddy's story also highlights a crucial disparity between them and other SGM residents: they have insurance. When those with health insurance struggle to remain in counseling, people who must pay completely out-of-pocket may neglect mental health services entirely.

Residents also spoke to the importance of SGM-competent and compassionate care providers for mental health. Rob discussed why this need persists:

> "I think we have a lot of mental health issues in the LGBTQ community. And there's very few practitioners who focus on that... There are people who know about it, but they don't have a lot of experience with it. Or people who would be willing to learn, but they have no one to teach them... but that would be great if we could get something like that for the LGBTQ community."

Richard extended this past the exam room and into the city.

> "Why have we not ever heard of coalition to be a part of the gay community of San Antonio… about mental health? Or, hey, why don't we do a suicide prevention town hall meeting into the gay and lesbian community?"

For San Antonio's SGM community, the most prominent barriers for mental healthcare were cost and lack of queer-specific options.

[4] This use of the pronoun "they" is gender neutral and singular. This is the first of many times I use it in this way throughout the thesis.

Physical Health

Cost, a lack of queer-affirming providers, and physical location impede access to physical health services for SGMs. More than sexual minorities, transgender individuals felt marginalized by San Antonio's medical system. As with mental health, affordability is a concern among participants like Shawn, a trans person with a pre-existing condition:

> "[Doctors] expect people to have money [for] surgeries when most of the time, a lot of trans people are homeless, don't have funds. Insurance companies are just now starting to accept trans surgeries and hormones to be able to get those services."

The realities Shawn outlined are personal to them; at the time of the interview, they lived at a homeless shelter in the area and were completely cut off from family support. Shawn—like the one in five trans people in America who experience homelessness at some point in their lives (Douglass et al., 2018)—struggles to find affordable resources that center their unique needs.

Without assurance that a healthcare provider is competent and affirming with gender minority patients, some trans residents forgo health services entirely. Devon relayed, "I haven't noticed any places that are like doctor's offices or anything, that outwardly state we have worked with trans people. And that's a huge issue because I haven't seen a primary care physician in six years." Devon's experiences in healthcare settings that are not trans-friendly inform their absence of help-seeking behaviors. It is easy to view this issue as a personal choice; however, a decision between potentially traumatizing visits and no care at all is a catch twenty-two rather than a genuine choice.

The physical locations of health centers played an explicit role in the needs of the community. Lily relayed a story about a friend who must travel over an hour north to receive support for a trans loved one, highlighting the lack of resources available to those living in San Antonio. "I have a friend who has a trans daughter and she is taking her back and forth to Austin to get the hormones, to get the

counseling because there's no one in San Antonio doing this stuff." Interviewees like Cassy also reported traveling to Austin for trans-specific health services but taking a trip up to Travis County requires other resources that others lack, like reliable transportation, money, and time off work. For these SGM residents, access to health is inextricable from access to other forms of capital. If accessible trans-focused health clinics open in San Antonio, these other resources may not present as such significant barriers to receiving quality care.

For both mental and physical health needs, participants expressed needs for information. Participants highlight a discrepancy in available services and those who have knowledge thereof. Donna, a homeless trans man, put it simply: "Sometimes getting access to the resources [is] pretty hard, because it's not widespread, advertised. You just kind of have to know somebody." This disadvantages those who do not "know somebody" due to their duration of residence in San Antonio, construction of social circles, and neighborhood. Jalen highlighted discrepancies in knowledge between different regions of San Antonio:

> "You see the publications going out and around. Okay, yes. I think we need to spread it out a little bit more. I think it's pretty much concentrated on the north and northwest side of town, probably because there's some more educated parts of town. Also, there are people on the south side, east side that are struggling."

The 'publications' to which Jalen referred were both formal and informal messages about San Antonio health resources that may benefit SGMs. The most recent Census data elucidates demographic differences between the areas Jalen mentions; the north and northwest neighborhoods of San Antonio tend to be whiter and wealthier than their counterparts to the east and south (Census Bureau, 2010). Disproportionality of information access has a documented connection with disproportionate quality of

life outcomes (Kent et al., 2012), so equal distribution of queer-supportive information can facilitate a closure of this gap. Information visibility, it seems, can facilitate information accessibility.

Social Space

San Antonio houses an approximately ten-block district inhabited mostly by SGM bars and nightclubs. While the businesses in this area sometimes serve as social spots for SGM residents, data reveal that community members wanted different spaces to serve the needs of a diverse community. The social spaces requested by participants are alternatives to gay bars.

For example, several sexual minority women request nightlife venues specific to ladies like them. Adia says this is not just a need in San Antonio, but in many ordinary cities. She joked, "I love my gay men but I just, you know, I want to see women." This need validates previous literature about SGM women and established spaces. Even in cities with queer mythos lesbian bars are sparse, invisible, and at worst, nonexistent (Valentine & Skelton, 2003). To interviewees, clubs that cater to SGM women not only serve as romantic mingling spaces, but as opportunities to build community.

Apart from bars, community members said they need more queer spaces that do not revolve around alcohol. Andie mentioned how difficult it was to find non-nightclub social venues while planning organization events. He said, "We tried to plan things that were non-alcoholic because a lot of it was an alternative to going to bars. We had a lot of folks in the group that were recovering alcoholics or recovering drug addicts." Queer serving bars/clubs are not often inaccessible to those with substance use disorders, minors, and people who do not like fast-paced, drinking-centered spaces for other reasons.

Supplementing the existing queer scene in San Antonio with more inclusive spaces to socialize allows SGMs to experience community solidarity and access similar others.

Demographic Support

Demographic support entails services for specific demographics within the local SGM community. Because queerness intersects with other elements of identity, queer community needs are not homogenous. The most frequent needs were for age and culture groups.

Age

Queer youth, for instance, may require extra education on non-normative identities, sexual health/safety, and coming out to family members. Samuel works at an AIDS Service Organization and acknowledged that the support his organization provides is not enough to remedy a need in the larger community. Even so, he offered a model for other organizations to employ:

> "[O]ur grant focuses on testing youth between the ages of 13 to 29. And so I run a team that goes out to the community and we offer free testing. We do classes on condom negotiation skills, STD and HIV 101s. And then we also do a course for people who are HIV positive, on how to build healthy relationships, and how to disclose your status to partners."

On the other end of the age spectrum, SGM seniors also need support. Eleven (~13%) participants were 55 or older; as people age, their needs also evolve. Daniel spoke from experience:

> "As I reach my 70th birthday, I want to see people who are talking about my issues as well… The demographics for LGBT seniors is incredible. But I have not seen anything in San Antonio that's been addressing those kinds of issues."

Senior care rarely receives attention in conversations of SGM needs, but participants in San Antonio clearly express concerns about life in this stage. Assistance for queer seniors may differ from normative

elderly experiences because norms of care for older adults place responsibility on family structures that SGM seniors may not have (Czaja et al., 2016). Thus, many questions of support remain unanswered.

Culture

For many who live on the cultural margins of normative queerness, a community means nothing if it is not inclusive. Queer publics often homogenize queerness to whiteness, allowing metronormativity and oppression to persist (Stone, 2018). Tyrone explained racist appropriation in the SGM community that he wished fellow members acknowledged:

> "[Y]ou have the people that say the stupid shit like, I'm a black woman trapped in a white boy's body… a lot of the lingo and the sayings and everything come from like iconic movies like Paris is Burning, but those are just black gay men [saying] things that they've grown up hearing. That's nothing but sitting at a cookout with your auntie. And that's where all that talk kind of started… hearing it kind of be diluted down and say, well this is gay culture 'cause it's not, it's an extension of black culture. And people don't wanna accept that."

To shed light on their needs, participants of color also said that they need those in positions of power within queer city structures and organizations to represent their identities. Daniel spoke to his identity as a Latinx gay man: "I would like to see more brown leadership. I would like to see [queer] brown people at the table." San Antonio has a predominantly Latinx population (Census Bureau, 2010), so leadership that reflects the groups who need service is equitable organizing.

Both age and culture come together in Valeria's comment: "Queer Latinos that only speak Spanish, there's that community that we don't even know enough about… It's like, God, I would love to tap into that, and to help in whatever way I could." Valeria pointed to a portion of the community that often does not receive attention because it exists with multiple marginalizations. Her statement highlights two important messages. Initially, the complex identities of SGMs in San Antonio spur needs

that ought not be ignored. Second, people want not just for their communities to improve, but *they* want to improve their communities. With the correct resources and institutional responses, these visions are possible.

Community Cohesion

Thematically, community cohesion is a concern among SGM residents of the city. This refers to the efficacy and joy with which collective action occurred in the local queer community. Some interviewees felt that the fracturing of queer collectives within San Antonio blocks avenues of involvement for those who wished to participate and advocate. By making the community visible and cohesive, more people have access to it and the resources it provides.

Participation

Darnell said that participation is impossible when the SGM community structure does not exist. He outright stated: “Yeah, there really, in my opinion there's not much of a gay community in San Antonio… There's lots of gay people but not really a community. There's not a lot of support.” Natalia, unlike Darnell, argued that the community indeed exists, but disagreements within leadership in separate organizations create tensions that limit cohesion and therefore, her participation.

> “I've done a lot for the community. But unfortunately, I haven't been involved as I should be because of, I just don't agree with a lot of the so-called leaders or club owners. There's a lot of, what can I say, there's a lot of division and a lot of animosity out there, so.”

This sentiment of animosity between SGM groups in San Antonio is not unique to Natalia. Matthew also thinks the community is broken off into “cliques,” comparing the absence of a welcoming community in San Antonio to the more robust one he remembers from living in Chicago. Among participants, this attitude most clearly comes across with longtime residents of the city. Their concerns and requests reflect a need for a stronger sense of community and mutual support.

Interviewees explained that cohesion is necessary to generate participation, especially of SGM residents who are not directly affiliated with queer organizations. Paula, as an organizational outsider, loves the work that San Antonio groups accomplish; however, she says this of involvement:

> "I really wanna say, having the Pride Center, having the Pride parade, and I see a lot of things in the city to do with that… and things like that that make me feel empowered. I wish I was more a part of that community to be able to maybe benefit from that in some way, but I'm not."

Paula wanted to reap the benefits of engaging with SGM organizations; those groups must reassess their strategies for involvement if they want people like her to engage.

Advocacy

Queerphobia and inequality still hover over SGM communities, so advocacy efforts must continue. However, participants viewed fractured activism as ineffective. Matthew, Andie, and other older adults stressed the importance of learning from the community's past to understand how queer justice may progress. Interviewees indicated a disconnect between generations of SGM residents that stifles progress. To Natalia, this disconnect presented as disrespect:

> "I just feel that we need more unification and the youngsters need to respect the elders because we went through a lot for the youngsters of today to be able to walk around holding hands out in public, doing whatever in public, and they need to learn to respect that."

As Natalia's statement highlights, many SGM older adults feel that queer youth and millennials are out-of-touch with the strides made in times of criminalized homosexuality, the AIDS crisis, and "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

While this may come across as disregard, younger SGM adults perceive this lack of cohesion as mere disconnect. Adia, a twenty-five-year-old woman, discussed her for and lack of access to intergenerational communication. She stated simply: "[T]he older gay community could have had

different lessons to teach [us] or different insight." The valuable lessons Adia alluded to are a source of agreement for interviewees of all ages.

Radical forms of queer collective action, Santiago argued, remain locked in the pages of history; he recommended a resurgence of these organizing strategies:

> "I think that we could use the Queer Nation models. I think we could use the Act Up models now for a lot of shit that's going on right now. So let's revisit those men and women of the 80's and find out how they got us to where we are and bring it back."

For context, Queer Nation was a 1990s-era coalition of radical activists who are often credited with destigmatizing the word "queer"; they emerged out of a meeting of the other organization Santiago mentioned, ACT UP, or the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (Rand, 2004). ACT UP was notorious for staging "die-ins," a highly visible form of protests that required participants to pose as corpses on the floors of establishments like churches (Gould, 2009). These movements mobilized SGM individuals of varying backgrounds, resources, and expertise; Santiago recommended bringing back such strategies of radicalism and inclusion.

Ultimately, community needs expressed by SGM residents—health, social spaces, demographic support, and community cohesion—revolve around *visibility* and *access*, concepts that work together at the individual and community levels. When tangible resources are more visible to community members through organizing efforts, individuals who may need them gain knowledge of their existence, an important first step in accessibility. Next steps for access are matters of funding and policy.

RQ2: HOW DO SGM COMMUNITY MEMBERS ENACT RESILIENCE?

Sometime during each conversation, the interviewers asked if the participants think they are resilient people. The answer, in all cases but one, is yes; these community members overwhelmingly feel confident in their resilience. Returning to Houston's (2015) operationalization of resilience as *bouncing forward*, interviewees explain a slew of strategies that keep their proverbial bouncy balls moving ahead. Angelita explained her perspective:

> "There's no manual out there of how to live your personal life. You just have to fail. Get up. Fail and get up. Fail and get up. That's just the way it is, and that's how we get through stuff. That's how we learn."

Angelita embodied a tactic that resonated not just with Houston (2015), but with many interviewees: lesson-learning. Learning lessons from eighty SGM participants about how they enact resilience resulted in two primary levels: individual and community. Individual-level strategies occur on a person-by-person basis, whereas community-level mechanisms require reciprocity and attempt to uplift all members involved. I move from the micro to macro in explaining their subthemes.

Individual

Individual resilience strategies enacted by SGM residents break off into two primary types. *Internal* strategies are coping mechanisms that do not require other people. *Relational* strategies, on the other hand, involve the presence of people who broadly contribute to one's resilience. Even the individual level of resilience contains a web of levels within it, demonstrating just how complex and interactive this construct is to communication dynamics.

Internal

Interviewees' internal resilience mechanisms were usually mundane, everyday strategies. Thematically, they are all *mindsets*, or frames of thinking that inspire resilience. Some of the mindsets mentioned were notable because consensus formed around them across interviews. Others exist on spectra of opposites, highlighting the multitude of ways in which participants discussed resilience. Individual mindsets include *comparison, in/authenticity, resources, service,* and *spite.*

Comparison. In moments of crisis, participants often engaged in situational comparison, or reminders that their experiences could be worse. This provided them with motivation to persevere. Individuals like Ruby compared their situations to those of people who are less fortunate. Ruby said, "I'm resilient in that I have survived some stuff that [broke] other people, but at the same time, it hasn't broken me yet." By acknowledging that she is not broken, Ruby reinvigorated her sense of agency and found strength within herself to proceed.

Others turned that comparison inward, remembering their previous run-ins with tumult. Kortland explained:

> "Now I'm not homeless, I'm out living how I want to. I'm not under my mom's roof, unnecessary stress or worry about other things that I shouldn't be. I would look back at that person who I was five years ago or six years ago and I'm like, that person got through it. This is nothing, you can get through it."

One last form of situational comparison is one that connects individuals to the divine. Many residents, like Victoria, enacted resilience through faith:

> "I don't know, there's some sort of connection with the higher power of God or something, that's somewhere in there, but it keeps us all going. So I think once we connect with that, things, as horrible as they may be, aren't so bad."

Victoria contextualized her experiences within a world controlled by an omnipotent agent: the Christian God. Many SGM residents interviewed identified with Christianity and Catholicism and alluded to these faiths dominating San Antonio's religious scene.

Comparison was a useful resilience mindset for many SGMs because it put their current experiences into a greater context, serving as a reminder that individual situations change so long as they persevere.

In/authenticity. Perspectives on authenticity varied greatly among SGM residents. For example, Sid believed that his strength comes from inauthenticity mixed with productivity:

> "I think sometimes when it comes to resiliency maybe we have to fake it until we make it, you know what I mean? If you're not necessarily as confident that you're going to come out of something, can you imbue yourself with the characteristics of somebody who would?"

For Sid, resilience is a performed skill that generates confidence along the way. That confidence commonly manifested for participants in humor. Samantha stated, "I just think humor is kind of like my bulletproof vest." For Sid, Samantha, Lily, and many others, maintaining a facade of resilience helped them develop the real thing.

While the "fake it 'til you make it" strategy found a home with some interviewees, its flip side, authentic expression, also had traction. Arjana discussed her transition from performed confidence to something she found more meaningful. "My family taught me to keep everything inside. I think that they thought that was resiliency, but there has to be some type of vulnerability

that goes with that." Arjana argues that this vulnerability is necessary to seek help and make informed choices about her future. Sasha feels similarly, invoking authenticity through careful, internal deliberation:

> "I guess because my mind compartmentalizes things, it's like, well, is this going to hurt me or my children or my family? Is this going to hurt my friends or not? Is this next step one that embodies love, dignity, and respect, and honesty, and communication? One for yes, two for no, and then just go from there."

In/authenticity served participants in different ways, but the outcome remained similar: SGMs enacted resilience through mindsets conscious of their inner selves.

Resources. Participants often reminded themselves of the resources and capital they have that secured their resilience. One type of resource that Lily cited as the source of her resilience came from privileges of whiteness and education. Lily candidly said:

> "I have the knowledge and the resources that if I don't get the services that I am due, if I don't get the resources that I am to be afforded, I have a voice to speak up and I know how to do so. If I were a minority, if I were less educated, I could see those being huge because how do you know how to get resources? I know how to protect myself. If I can't afford the things that I need to be safe in [the] sex community, I know where to get them. I know how to get free STI testing. I know how to go see a doctor if I have concerns. I know how to do the research to find [queer] friendly physicians and doctors. I know how to navigate that world."

Lily argued that circumstances of her birth operate as resources that contribute to her resilience. Participants like Paul, Jose, and Marie also argued that their resilience stemmed from privileges they felt fortunate to have.

Alternatively, Cassy attributed her resilience processes to the lessons she learned due to adversity. She explained, “I don't equate the resilience with white privilege. I equate the resilience with the queer part of me, the rebellious part of me, the Latina part of me, the Buddhist part of me.” Tyrone also expressed this sentiment. After describing his difficult childhood as a black boy in Alabama, he said, “I think being in that environment kind of helped me grow a tougher skin. So I deal with things a lot better now.” Tyrone argued that lived experience is a type of resource, one that informed his resilience strategies. These narratives highlight a tension between opposing resources invoked in resilience mindsets: the social capital of privilege and the lessons imparted by oppression.

Service. When an internal locus of control was insufficient for SGM residents, participants engaged in a service mindset. They looked outward to individuals who may require their strength. Andrea gives a simple example:

> “Honestly, some of my strongest moments of support have been from my cat, just going home and, I live alone so I go home, I see my cat, and, yep, I'm gonna get through medical school so I can provide for you.”

Perhaps it is without surprise that Andrea was not the only pet owner who found resilience in knowing that her animal needs her. Beyond cats and dogs, interviewees explained that their children, parents, spouses, and other loved ones need support that only they could provide; they enacted resilience by reminding themselves for whom they must persevere.

Timor echoed this sentiment, but expanded it to a community service mindset. He explained that he stays strong on behalf of the entire queer community:

> “I got more resilient, or became resilient, because I want the world to change, I want society to change, I want to make sure that kids 20, 30 years from now, or even 10 years

> from now, five years from now, two years from now, can see that we are making progress and things can change. Things can change for the better, they can hold on, people can hold on, and everything's going to be alright."

A belief in widespread positive change and his role in it helped Timor persevere. Many SGMs expressed this sentiment toward their immediate queer community or to communities across the world. Simply considering that other queer people rely on their survival had a profound impact on resilience mindets of SGM residents.

Spite. Some participants perform resilience through pure spite; in a world that can be so unloving of their identities, they resist structures of oppression merely through existing. Cassy discussed her resilience in the context of an everyday task. "[J]ust being an out trans woman is an act of rebellion. It's a political statement in and of itself. Just going to [grocery store chain] is a political statement." Entering these everyday spaces to accomplish simple purchases, Cassy acknowledged, put her at risk as a trans woman. She suggested that choosing to enter those spaces with that knowledge is proof that she is not afraid of those who may want to hurt her. Mistie took this notion to a cosmic level:

> "I feel like I have to be strong, because people hate you for even existing in this world, because you're a woman, because you're black, because you're gay. I have to be strong. I have no other option, I feel. But I like it."

Sexism, racism, and homophobia were palpable forces for Mistie. She felt without choice in her resilience, but as her last remark confirms, she took away from it a positive outlook.

Relational

Individual strategies that are relational involve the presence of other people. The role of the relationship is either contentious (inciting adversity that warrants resilience) or supportive

(inciting resilience against adversity). Sometimes, these roles overlap because relationships are complex, serving people more than one function. The relational resilience strategies are *confronting, comfort-seeking,* and *concealing*.

Confronting. Many participants chose to confront adversity directly. This strategy showcased relationships between the resilient actor and contentious others who fueled conflicts. Jesus, for example, said confrontation was his favorite method because it quiets dissenters. In his words:

> "I wish somebody would tell me something negative because I'm going to come back at you with some educated answer. I'm going to educate you about this and I'm going to sit you down and make you realize what you just said was wrong."

Part of this confrontation, Jesus said, is explaining to someone why a remark or act is bigoted. Andie felt similarly, but his contentious others were clients. His job was to educate older adults in San Antonio about SGM issues in their communities, and he was often met with resistance to change. His strategy involved careful emotional choices:

> "As we talk, a lot of it is just matter-of-fact talk. A lot of it is just by example. The calmer I am, and especially when they ask me a really hard question or they make a comment that's kind of discriminatory, kind of caustic, the calmer I am and the more matter of fact that I answer that question, I pretty soon see … They're becoming engaged. I've seen that over and over and over when I train."

Contentious others did not always clash with the resilient actor's queer identity; nevertheless, being part of SGM social groups allowed individuals to proceed into conflict with confidence. Eric, a priest, described how he won an argument with a fellow clergyman: "I dommed the priest, but it was just being present and assured." As a member of queer kink circles, Eric said that his involvement in such empowered communities taught him to be assertive in other spheres of life. In his quotation, "dommed"

means dominated, referring to the jargon of many kink groups, following it up with a more vanilla (pun intended) explanation of what that means. By using kink vocabulary to describe a nonsexual encounter with a nonsexual, contentious other, Eric suggested that his experience in sexual minority communities contributes to his acts of resilience.

Comfort-seeking. SGMs seek comfort from supportive others during times of stress. Valeria put well the importance of having others on whom she may lean. “For a long time I thought I had to yell at everything, and then you realize some things hit you harder and you can't always yell but you can find someone who can for you when you can't.” Supportive others for SGMs take many roles: family, friends, therapists. Sometimes, support came from unexpected places. Kiara mentioned one of her unconventional, but meaningful friendships. She said:

> “I have a straight friend, very in the church, Bible-based. She's very... I can go to her and talk to her about anything. She doesn't look at me any different, we've grown up together. So, just getting different viewpoints on any certain situation if I'm feeling [upset].”

Even though Kiara’s church friend led a very different life than her own, her role as a supportive other was not much different than others described by participants. Interviewees often described their supportive others as excellent listeners and selfless loved ones. These companions were available in acute times of stress, but their presence in the resilient actor’s life made them chronic fixtures of relational resilience.

Concealing. Masking one’s queer identity frequently appeared in the data as a resilience strategy. This came in the form of downplaying, altering, or denying one’s queerness in the presence of contentious others. SGM residents did so for a variety of reasons; a common one, highlighted by Katie, was job security:

> "I mean, San Antonio seems kind of like a small town. You run into people all the time, and it's like, if they think bisexual people are slutty, promiscuous, divorced women, then how's that going to affect me getting my next job, or stuff like that?"

For these individuals, maintaining or securing a job was more important for resilient living than being out as a queer person.

Hiding one's identity may be specific to certain audiences; for instance, Angel was out to many of their friends, but not to their family. To them, concealing their nonbinary identity was easier than explaining gender nuances specific to the Spanish language:

> "Sí, por ejemplo, en mi familia para nada usa los pronombres [sic] elle o [sic] ney they. En mi familia, ni siquiera les he dicho porque yo sé que no lo van a entender, y va a ser muchísimo más trauma para mí."[5]

Like Angel, Nia concealed her queer identity with family; as a minor who still lived at home, she pretended to be heterosexual because losing the resources provided to her by family could have severely disadvantaged her. She said:

> "It's the safest way because I don't know how my mom is going to react… my dad thinks I'm just a hardcore ally, very liberal and stuff like that. But if he were to find out, I don't know how he would feel, how my mom would feel, and stuff like that. It's kind of like the safest way thinking the worst thing is going to happen.:

Nia remarks that she will come out when she is eighteen and has more agency to control her finances, housing, etc. In Angel and Nia's stories, family members simultaneously acted as contentious and supportive others. While both SGMs loved their families and relied on them for support, they also

[5] English translation: "Yes, for example, in my family they don't use pronouns elle [the gender-neutral alternative to ella or el]. In my family, I haven't even told them because I know that they won't understand it and that is just going to be more trauma for me."

masked their identities to ensure conflict remained at a minimum. This emphasizes the precarity of relationships and how different resilience strategies have the power to alter one's relational roles.

Community

Community resilience strategies are specific to SGM social circles, organizations, and networks. They seek to uplift all members involved and require reciprocity. Many participants argued that their individual-level resilience tactics influenced their ability to partake in community resilience. Alex, for example, considered his queer community to be the group of SGM people with whom he lives at a homeless shelter. his notions of resilience explained how he kept strong for the community.

> "I think it starts out as a personal thing and then you find your community and then you bring each other together and make it one big movement. If you yourself don't find resilience in yourself, then you're not going to find a big group and make it a bigger impact."

In his view, resilience began internally and eventually migrated to a group setting. Alex and like-minded participants rationalized the connection between levels of resilience for SGM individuals and their communities.

This interplay explains the similarities between micro-level strategies and their macro-level counterparts. SGMs relayed that their community resilience methods are *collective mindsets* and *support systems*, which sound and operate like internal and relational tactics.

Collective Mindsets

Participants identified collective mindsets as forces of resilience. These intangible traits empowered the community and helped members forge strong connections. Rob argued that a

commitment to truth holds SGM community members together in times of distress. He said, "I think [queer] people are some of the most resilient people on the planet because people are just so hard on us. And still we strive to be ourselves in the face of adversity, in the face of violence." Rob felt that SGM communities hold strong because they empower each other through a mindset they all share.

In a smaller section of the San Antonio queer community, Angel found power in radical love. Identifying with an activist community at the intersections of migration and queerness, Angel said, "Nuestra forma de resistir y de luchar es querernos y amarnos radicalmente y apoyarnos al 100. Esa es nuestra forma de luchar." [6] Angel and their community's love for each other defied the logic of a world that—for multiple reasons—hated to see them thrive. Angel described resistance as a powerful community paradigm that kept members of their activist group resilient and compassionate. Community mindsets, it seems, are specific to subgroups within queer communities as well as the consciousness of SGMs at large.

Support Systems

Systems of support operate are symbiotic; they are beneficial to all who contribute. Interviewees identify *chosen families, support groups,* and *online networks* that foster resilience.

Chosen families. One popular type of queer community resilience structure was the chosen family. Darius explained the value of his chosen relatives:

> "We can support each other I think in a way that maybe brothers and sisters would have, or family would, without having to deal with all of that family issue. They've been the core of my strength… It's like a family. You help your cousins out, you help your kin out, you help them out. It's like a family. I've got to help them out if I want them to help me out. We are all together."

[6] English Translation: "Our way of resisting and fighting is loving each other radically and fully supporting each other. That is our way of fighting back."

Queer studies literature has long understood the importance of chosen families in the lives of SGM individuals and communities (Hull & Ortyl, 2019; Blair & Pukall, 2015; Mitchell, 2008). The metaphor of family was also a resilience tactic in the military, which has a large presence in San Antonio. Cindy recounted her experience in the 1980s:

> "So that was kind of a very, very scary time to be in the military. You had a lot of code words, like 'family.' Are you 'family'? That's how you knew that somebody was gay, as far as women goes, or men."

Darius and Cindy's stories illustrated that resilience is both about the structure of a chosen family and the language used to keep them safe.

Support groups. Residents cited queer support groups as opportunities to enact resilience. Groups were generally sponsored by specific organizations or advocacy groups. Rob attended a local SGM organization's meetings to forge bonds with fellow queer residents and learn from their individual resilience strategies.

> "I think one of the ways it helps me be resilient is like I love to go to the [organization] meetings and I like to hear about other people's stories, because from them, listening to them, I think I learn coping mechanisms that they use. And that helps me learn things that I could do. I see what it's like for them when they have family members who are unaccepting and how they deal with it. And I see how it is when they have family members who are accepting and how they deal with that. And that kind of helps me to see how other people navigate I think."

Older members of the SGM community, like Leonardo, share their experiences so people like Rob may benefit. Leonardo explained:

> "I'm very candid. I'm not afraid to speak about the things I've been through because that's not where I am now. It's not that I had to go through those things, but like I said, if my story can help anybody, even if it's just one person, then I'm happy."

The mutual aid reported in these groups kept a momentum of resilience for those who sought SGM community services.

Online networks. Community, for many, is online. Scholars understand a relationship between SGM individuals and online spaces to be largely productive for collective action, education, and comradery (Soriano, 2014; Craig & McInroy, 2014; Fox & Ralston, 2016). The participants in this study confirmed the literature. Arjana, a trans woman, found comfort in the visibility of other transgender people on social media she said, "[T]hey inspired me. So, I feel like I have the right to take up space in my own city now." This empowerment goes past the individual, Gabriel explained. He argued that online spaces allow for community resilience on a large scale.

> "I think the internet has completely changed the way that [queer] people can relate to one another… [E]ven something as silly as a Drag Race, it's such a unifying across all demographic types of human. Something like that. And the fact that every Thursday on Twitter, it's a trending topic, that everybody talks about and everyone knows about. And I think things like that, as time goes on, I think those are going to be what, and to a certain extent keeps our community together."

Online support systems provided SGM residents with agency in different ways, one of which is anonymity. Donna empowered queer people on social media to seek advice without the fear of identification. He explained:

> "I have a page on Facebook for people that if they don't wanna come out to anybody, or if they're shy, or something like that, it's all anonymous so they can come and talk to me about their problems and what they're going through for advice."

When not anonymous, participants still use social media to control others' access to their information. Shane decided carefully on which social media platforms to disclose details about his identity. "When I first came out I actually did it on my Instagram because I had a different following there than on Facebook, which was all church, family, that sort of thing." Shane enacted resilience by coming out using a platform on which he had queerer, more supportive followers.

Social media platforms also provide distance between readers and authors. Leonardo explained his Facebook coming out process:

> "Actually today, coincidentally enough, they're painting that rainbow crosswalk at [intersection]. Well, I shared that on my Facebook. I have family members that I've never really discussed my sexuality with. I captioned it, "It's a great day to be gay." And in parentheses, "if you didn't know, now you do" … [I]t was funny because I'm just like, I don't give a shit… Like I said, a lot of family is going to read that and I don't care anymore. I just feel like that within itself was liberating. Coworkers that I have that don't know that I'm gay, will know now. And I'm okay with that."

Leonardo's online disclosure allowed him to say what he wanted without repercussions of direct interactions with family or co-workers; simultaneously, he received support from SGMs in his online networks. In sum, online systems provide distance from contentious others whilst empowering SGM communities to use cyberspace as a platform for support.

Understanding both the individual and community strategies SGM residents enacted for resilience in San Antonio provides a glimpse into how this community kept strong. The micro- and macro-levels share mindset and physical tactics and supply resilient actors with chronic and acute strategies to confront adversity. The final dimension of resilience elucidated by the data, place, warrants its own question.

RQ3: HOW DO RESILIENCE STRATEGIES COINCIDE WITH PLACE?

Place situated itself strongly within narratives of resilience for San Antonio's SGM residents and their communities. Four themes regarding place-based resilience emerge from the interviews. Participants *forged physical boundaries, invoked place identity, utilized community locations,* and *participated in SGM events*.

Forging Physical Boundaries

When participants discussed their physical boundaries, they argued that creating metaphorical lines in the sand enabled resilience by preserving their autonomy. However, their relationships to those boundaries varied. For some, moving from one side of a physical boundary to another was liberating. Sebastian, for instance, took preemptive steps to gain self-sufficiency if his mother reacted poorly to him coming out as trans. He told interviewers:

> "I actually moved out before I came out to my mom… There was a lot of things that would have told me, hey, she's going to be fine with it. She's not going to get mad… But I still, I had to move out beforehand because I was like, just in case she's not okay with it, I can't pretend to be something I'm not any longer. So I moved out."

Sebastian did not want to leave his housing or emotional well-being up to chance; he distanced himself from a potentially contentious actor and established his own space. Cindy said she did the same when she moved away from an unfulfilling heterosexual marriage and came out to her children. These intentional choices to move away from tense places were both acts of resilience and acts to empower future resilience.

Others found strength in standing their ground and remaining within the boundaries they called home. After being attacked by a transphobic resident of his homeless shelter, Alex and some of his

fellow trans residents implored the shelter staff to remove the assailant from their living quarters. Alex explained that they took legal action to forge even stricter physical boundaries.

> "We actually got to go press charges and charges were filed. He was kicked off campus. He's not even allowed to look at us or he'll be completely exited from the program with no help. Definitely that group alone was perfect with resilience."

Alex had a group of supporters willing to resist because they did not want their place of safety to remain a space of transphobia. They took charge of defending their space not just for Alex, but for all of them. Whether participants created boundaries in a new location or remained on their original turf, they established physical locations that perpetuated individual and community resilience.

Invoking Place Identity

San Antonio as a place was also meaningful to many participants' resilience strategies. The mere identification with the city, in some cases, provided people with strength. Samantha talked about returning to San Antonio after a long, tumultuous stay in California. She said:

> "And then I came back to San Antonio, it's like those flowers that they close up at night and then they bloom, and then they close. It's like coming back here, I feel like I'm able to bloom again… I have to find a new space in the community but I won't doubt that I will find it because the community is that strong."

Living in San Antonio again gave Samantha her opportunity to bloom. Alejandra agreed; her attachment to the city fueled her resilience because she feels a strong sense of community. Alejandra explained, "I guess when I think a lot about the hardships that I think about like my own personal hardships, but a hardship of mine that is not necessarily my own but that I share with San Antonio." Sharing her hardships with the city itself means that Alejandra does not need to carry burdens alone. This supports claims made in existing literature that place attachment facilitates resilience (Guo et al., 2018). Enacting

resilience by invoking place identity falls into the category of collective mindsets because locations are made of people, groups, and communities; without the belief that others stand in solidarity, place identity means little more than a dot on a map.

Utilizing Community Locations

Specific sites in San Antonio also support community resilience because they remind people of their support systems or serve as meeting spots thereof. For instance, Jackson used city resources to feel connected with themself and the community. They said:

> "[S]ometimes I'll go to the [organization] and they have a community garden. And so I love going over there and just helping with whatever they need. And… getting that escape but also connecting with other people as well as like connecting with the earth and stuff."

Queer landmarks in the city also served as icons of strength for SGM residents. After a bad day, Valeria explained:

> "I took a drive with a friend of mine, we got a cup of coffee, and we just drove two or three times over the gay crosswalk. I was like, 'I feel better now.' I was like, 'And it glitters!'"

This "gay crosswalk" received considerable attention in the data as a reminder of solidarity within the city's queer community. While Valeria visited the crosswalk after acute time of adversity, its consistency as a landmark allows for visitation regardless of time. Because locations like these are San Antonio staples, utilizing them as sites of resilience is a chronic strategy.

Participating in SGM Events

Participants viewed San Antonio's Pride Month events as opportunities to participate in a hyper-visible display of community resilience. Events like the Pride parade highlighted how strength in numbers reduced individuals' fears surrounding authentic expression. Evren, a trans man, spent much of

his life uncomfortable with his gender identity; attending Pride, however, gave him freedom to express himself authentically:

> "Like at the Pride parade. If I go to drag shows. I've been to a couple of their fundraisers and they're family. I take my daughter. It's fun and everybody's dressed up. It isn't like anybody is hiding. Nobody is hiding who they are, no one is ashamed of who they are."

The community's vitality and fearlessness inspired that same affect in individuals, illustrating the interactive nature of resilience levels.

Watching Pride unfold also provided SGMs with newfound community solidarity. After attending her first Pride, Imani wanted to get more involved in community organizing efforts. She said:

> "I hadn't been to Pride before. I've wanted to go, but I just never went and I don't know why… Last year when I went, it was eye-opening because I had never seen so many people from all ages, all backgrounds and ethnicities together celebrating. You'd have super young people. Everyone with their families… Now that [I] went and I've seen it, now I'm empowered."

Not only did participation in SGM events inspire positive emotions, it inspired action. Many interviewees cited Pride as their introduction to queer activism, organizing, and comradery. The resilience strategies enacted at San Antonio Pride began with mindsets and led to embodiment.

To summarize this geographic saga, SGM residents' strategies for resilience often coincided with place, but most, it seems, were not built into the structure of San Antonio. Sid explained it well when he said, "I don't believe in [the] Road to El Dorado. Like I don't think you will find the community. I think you really do have to build it." San Antonio's queer residents largely used the built environment as a metaphorical sandbox, building on top of it their hand-crafted mechanisms for individual and community resilience.

Discussion

Though inquiring about SGM community needs, we discovered the resident-expressed health, social space, demographic support, and community cohesion shortcomings of access and visibility in San Antonio's status quo. The individual- and community-level resilience strategies highlight for us the strength and ingenuity of SGMs whose mindsets, relationships, and systems of care propel them into action. Place-based resilience exemplified the connection between geography and collective action, providing us with a look into San Antonio's queer community infrastructure. I intend to share all findings with the people who made it possible: San Antonio's SGM community. The San Antonio Pride Center will consider intraorganizational and city-wide methods of addressing the needs expressed by community members. Community-based researchers have obligations to our data sites. A thesis is no exception to this paradigm.

Beyond dissemination, these findings spur implications for organizational studies that revolve around the precarity of community identification, visibility's connection with commodification, and place-based research. Implications for resilience studies focus on the interaction of construct levels, limitations of language, and tensions between privilege and adversity.

Implications for Organizational Studies

Community Identification

Participants' responses call into question the constitution of community membership. Scholars of SGM communities often assume that one's identification as a non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender person automatically makes them part of the amorphous 'queer community' (Frost & Meyer, 2012; McGovern, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2019). When the community label is problematized in the literature, it is usually on account of other queer people gatekeeping involvement in public spheres (Atkins & Marston,

1999; Whitesel, 2014). However, data in the present study highlight something different; despite clear personal identification as a sexual and/or gender minority, some interviewees do not identify or affiliate with San Antonio's queer community. Paula, for instance, explained, "I have a few [queer] friends, but I don't have a true sense of community."

Paula and others who feel this way cited *participation* as a key factor in community identification. Individuals like Alejandra, Alexus, and Gabriel said they were not members of San Antonio's queer community because they did not frequent the city's SGM nightclubs. Disconnect from activism and a lack of involvement in SGM-serving organizations are the reasons participants like Timor, Angelita, and Mateo did not consider themselves members. Interviewees who felt embedded in the queer community, like Becky, Ryan, and Shanice, also reported working with queer organizations around the city. Participants named at least nine unique queer-serving groups in San Antonio and eight functioning SGM bars and/or clubs; participants suggested that affiliation with at least one of these organizations is a perceived criterion for community membership. Mario drove this point home:

> "I do feel very disconnected. I know that a lot of people feel that way, and it's not because I haven't been accepted or anything… But I'm also not providing support for anybody in the gay community. I know the road goes both ways."

'Queer community' or 'SGM community' is often used as an overarching term for those with an individual identity and lived experience, but these alone do not appear to constitute membership.

Communication scholarship is full of organizational and community identification. What remains sparse, however, is the consideration of communities based on a permanent, non-chosen identity. Studying one's identification with, for instance, the San Antonio drag queen community is fundamentally different than the queer community because only one of those identities may be removed at the end of a day. Lin and Israel (2012) attempt to understand this phenomenon through their

development of a psychological sense of community scale specific to SGMs (PSOC-LGBT); however, its applications tend to treat this construct as secondary to their investigations. The PSOC-LGBT is a largely untapped quantitative resource in studies of community involvement, identification, and inclusion. In future studies, network analysts may consider using their expertise to visualize the different levels of community identification as they relate to organizational involvement, nightlife participation, and individual identity.

Visibility

Findings reveal that visibility is central to both community needs and resilience strategies. Visibility provides legitimacy and power to queer communities; Hennessey (2017) acknowledges the ways in which visibility politics paved the way for more widespread support of SGM-inclusive legislation. The power structures under which they obtain legitimacy, however, are heteronormative (Yep, 2003). Through their work on queer television, Westerfelhaus and Lacroix (2006) argue that public queerness is moderated and tailored by dominant forces (i.e. whiteness, maleness, straightness), thus damping the flame of revolutionary efforts for SGM justice.

Visibility, though potentially empowering on a personal level, perpetuates the overarching notion that queer people must exist within and gain legitimacy from oppressive structures. This lends itself to a continuing culture of commodities and profits circulated at the expensive of the marginalized (Hennessey, 2017; Conrad, 2014). Queer scholars must recognize the needs and strategies of SGM communities, but not without interrogating their theoretical complications. I am by no means saying that San Antonio's queer residents are flawed for being empowered by visibility; instead, I task scholars with deeper qualitative investigations that directly address the question: how can we negotiate community desires for visibility whilst acknowledging its complex, problematic privileging of the normative?

Place

Though qualitative data impedes the generalizability of claims about in/congruency, I observed themes in the data that build upon scholarly understandings of queer urban life. McClain, Hawkins and Yehia (2016) find that SGM-focused health services are more likely to be in neighborhoods with majority queer populations. Participants' requests for SGM-affirming healthcare in San Antonio may reflect potential needs in other ordinary cities. Recruiting criteria for participants may factor into this finding, as 53.75% of the participants have an annual income under $30,000. As researchers continue along this thread of inquiry, community needs assessment methodology help us understand the desires and strengths of different urban areas. Craig's (2011) study of queer youth in Miami-Dade County is an exemplar of this method that ties together nuances of place, identity, and policy. This is most useful for practitioners who seek to better the lives of the communities they research.

The takeaway for organizational theorists: place matters. The gaps in literature about queer spatial organization in urban environments may be indication enough that geography and organizational studies share similarities that often seem lost upon both disciplines. Place-based initiatives expand our perspectives on what it means to organize and utilize the built environment for communicative purposes.

Resilience Studies

Levels

The data highlight a discrepancy in levels of resilience. Findings for RQ2 simultaneously highlight the breadth of individual-level strategies and their similar but less frequent community-level counterparts. Answers to RQ1 hint at this disconnect in recurring needs for city resources and community cohesion. In practice, influential community figures may consider addressing this through further conversations, outreach, and planning. Currently enacted resilience strategies respond to the needs of SGM residents; when powers-that-be implement structural changes, the level of resilience

transfers from individual to community. This highlights the theoretical component: the relationship between resilience levels.

Barbour (2017) reminded us that within the layers of a construct exist interactions that influence how it presents. Resilience theorizing has not actualized the relationship between different scales of the construct. In the context of this study, changes in the macro-level (community process) of resilience could replace or remedy micro-level (individual) strategies. This interactional, multilevel perspective highlights synergy between the individual and community levels of resilience. Studying these interactions may provide insights into why micro- or meso-level needs persist in the absence of macro-level resilience tactics. This implication is also fruitful for practitioners who may forge clearer paths toward resilience interventions, be those in communication, public health, or urban planning.

Language

This study also points to the importance of language in researching latent constructs. One participant, Angel, preferred a Spanish-language interview, which came with a complication: there is no direct translation for "resilience." The interview translator clarified that in place of resilience they opt for the Spanish word "rebotar," which means "to rebound." This translation comes into conflict with the definition of resilience that focuses on bouncing forward, proposed by Houston (2015) and adopted for this study. While it did not appear to fundamentally change Angel's responses to the interview schedule, this disconnect in operationalization may influence future resilience studies conducted in languages other than English. This also requires considering why our current operationalizations of resilience are so deeply bound to Western chronemics. Linguistic, cultural, and geographic differences must receive consideration as we study complex social phenomena to decolonize and universalize our work.

Resource Tensions

Responses that created the *resources mindset* resilience theme (pp. 37-38) uncovered that some individuals believed their resilience came from privilege and others from adversity. Behind these narratives of normativity and marginalization are two views of resilience in accordance with *time.* Lily's view, for instance, depends on previous knowledge of resources, something *proactive* in relation to possible adversity. The parts of Cassy's identity for which she experiences oppression (i.e. womanhood, transness, Latinidad, and religion) allude to *reactive* processes in which she experiences adversity and adapts accordingly. This dichotomy recurs throughout the data and becomes apparent in the overarching answer to RQ2. Communication scholars generally call proactive processes "preparedness," but terms that point to the same phenomenon—like "vigilant resilience" and "proactive resilience"—also appear in the literature (Stephens, 2020; Carlson, 2018; Lucas & Buzzannell, 2012). The lack of consistent terminology requires scholars in our discipline to pursue this construct with more clarity and shared language.

In many contexts, proactive processes are more difficult to accomplish. Vale's (2014) work on city infrastructure explains that anticipatory measures are often expensive, leaving low-income individuals and organizations vulnerable. Preparedness, as it turns out, is a privilege reliant on social class and wealth (Vale, 2014). Returning to the present study, Cassy's quotation suggests that the privilege of proactivity does not constitute resilience. Elements of resilience that stem from adverse experience receive ample attention in scholarship; however, the complexities of preparedness, resilience, and privileged identities, remains undertheorized.

Future work must consider this dichotomy. Practitioners of disaster preparedness, for instance, may consider this dialectic in addressing acute resilience strategies in cities with socioeconomic disparities. Community organizers can keep privilege and adversity in mind when preparing action plans

for political resistance. Critical theorists might consider the implications of deeming lessons learned from adversity a *resource*. In any case, theory and practice are not lost for threads to pick up from queer community, organizing, and resilience studies.

Conclusion

Willie found his home in San Antonio, Texas. Others who live in the city still need crucial resources to call it their safe haven. This thesis serves as a jumping-off point to respond to SGM community needs in San Antonio and other ordinary cities; it also provides findings and implications to advance the discipline. Beyond its practical and theoretical applications, this project is a celebratory exploration of those who find resilience and safety in themselves, their communities, and their city. A world steeped in queerphobia is often difficult for sexual and gender minorities to navigate; resilience is crucial for queer communities' survival amidst messages of hate. Our communities' abilities to thrive in the face of trauma is a powerful form of resistance against uncaring structures; a world in which we may all thrive in our respective cities—ordinary and beyond—is one to which we must bounce forward.

Epilogue

The eighty interviews analyzed in this study uncover queer geographies of both need and resilience in San Antonio. I had every intention of visiting each site mentioned by name; however, the global COVID-19 pandemic disrupted these plans. More than that, this crisis disrupts lives. As I write this, cities across Texas—including San Antonio—follow shelter-in-place orders to prevent the spread of disease. Each article, new case, and city ordinance brings these participants to the forefront of my mind. What becomes of the eight interviewees with HIV or AIDS, conditions that leave people immunocompromised? Are the needs of the older adults met? What of the individuals experiencing homelessness? I likely will not know these answers, but after thorough analysis of their words, I know this: these people are exceptionally resilient. However, community alone cannot solve a crisis. This is a plea for structural changes to facilitate health, support, and solidarity.

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